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THE SOLID SOUTH

SPEECH

OF

EMORY SPEER

OF GEORGIA

DECEMBER 19, 1902

AT THE BANQUET OF THE
INDEPENDENT CLUB
OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK.

1903
MACON PRESS-PRINT

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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE INDEPENDENT CLUB :

Very happy am I to come from my distant Southern home to meet on this felicitous occasion the Independent Club and its honored guests. The opportunity is perhaps salutary. "Home keeping youths," we are told by the Bard of Avon, "have ever homely wits." Indeed it may be feared that all Americans are not a little provincial. It is then, advantageous for a dweller in that clime, whose soft breezes from the Atlantic or the Gulf are tempered by "the wandering summer of the seas," to visit these hyperborean skies which it is not difficult to discern impart a glorious vigor to man and a glowing beauty to woman. Nor, believe me, would you regret if like Aladdin in the Arabian story I could whisk this comely gathering to a land I know and love, where even now

"The sweet South breathes o'er banks of violets."

where the rose gardens yet bloom, and where the soft moonlight lingers on fields as white as yours, but with the snowy luxuriance of our royal staple. Indeed, the heritage of Americans in those magnificent states somewhat generally known as the Solid South, and the charm of their redundant beauties would kindle a prouder Americanism even in minds accustomed to the opulence of this Empire State, and sated with the wonders of Niagara.

The resuscitation of the Southern people since the great civil war will be deemed by the future historian as an epoch in the progress of civilization. Speaking as a Southern man, "native and to the manner born," as one who loves his people with every fibre of his being, while I do not claim that they are all saints, and concede that among them there is a considerable sprinkling of sinners, I yet contend that their record for a generation past is impossible to a people who, however mistaken, were otherwise than intrepid, patriotic and sincere. Said Edward Everett, "Men

do not gather the grapes and figs of science, art, taste, wealth and manners from the thorns and thistles of lawlessness, venality, fraud and violence." But are there no shadows across the bright promise of their future? Are there no portents of impending evil in the political and social forecast which should arouse their best and most anxious thought, and since they are your brothers in blood, and since your happiness and prosperity is indissolubly united with theirs, is there nothing in the conditions which environ them to awaken your solicitude, and to invoke your assistance.

These are indeed not merely Southern problems. They are also your problems. Is it consistent with your safety, that so many millions of white men there, blood of your blood and bone of your bone, should exhibit so much indifference to national matters of the most vital concern, that they should hear and consider but one side, and that not always the right side, of every political question, that they should fail to respond to the consensus of American public opinion, that they should forever submit to abnormal and unhealthy political methods, where the skill and cunning of the slatemaker and wire puller, may supplant, in the selection of representatives whose votes may control the policies of the nation, the pure Americanism and lofty patriotism which should be at the service of the people; that the white Americans of fourteen states should fail to exert that effective force on the policy of the country, which of right should belong to their numbers, their means, and their capacity for clear, patriotic and decisive political thought. These are the questions. They have been propounded at home. They are propounded here. Is it not true that if we are to maintain in these United States a government which is republican in fact, and not merely in name, that these un-American conditions must be removed? And is it not also true that to this mighty task there should be devoted the most patient, the most liberal, the profoundest, the most patriotic thought and statesmanship of this country? No hopeful step can we take unless we banish partisanship and the desire for party advantages from our minds, and unless we consider this question in the light of impartial history. Nor is he worthy to approach this lofty duty who does not at once rejoice in the accomplished fact of the union restored, and in the accretion

of its strength from the manhood, courage, faith and integrity of the Southern people.

It is undeniably true that the political attitude of the Southern people toward the government, is directly ascribable to the swift bestowal by the reconstruction acts of unlimited manhood suffrage upon members of the African race. The emancipation of the slaves, whatever may be believed to the contrary, was far less consequential. After Appomattox, none so visionary who did not know that slavery was at an end. The thirteenth amendment making human bondage forever impossible was ratified by the original constituency of the states lately in secession, by the votes of those men whose bayonets for four years had upheld the fortunes of the Confederate States. Thirty-one years ago I listened at the University of Georgia to a carefully prepared oration by Senator Benjamin H. Hill, perhaps the foremost Southern man of that day. After stating that for more than thirty years Southern genius had been chained by some offended god of jealous vengeance to the solid rock of slavery, he exclaimed in tones that yet ring in my memory:

“’Tis loosed! We inquire not how, whether by fate or by folly; whether in right or in hate; we thank Thee, God, for the fact, ’Tis loosed!”

The possibility of unlimited suffrage among the negroes was at first not contemplated even by those great Americans whose eloquence, statesmanship and military talents had been devoted to the preservation of the Union. In his famous speech on raising the flag on Fort Sumter, on the 14th of April, 1865, Mr. Beecher declared. “We should educate the black man and by education make him a citizen.” In a private letter to Governor Hahn, congratulating him as the first free state governor of Louisiana. Mr. Lincoln wrote, “You are about to have a convention which among other things will prepare and define the elective franchise. I barely suggest for your private consideration whether some of the colored people may not be let in, as for instance, the very intelligent, etc.” It is interesting to know that the vice-president of the confederacy entertained views similar to those of the president of the union. In his testimony before the reconstruction committee, Alexander H. Stephens said, “individually I should not be opposed to a proper system of restricted or limit-

ed suffrage for this class of our population." In the plan for reconstruction offered by the brilliant Henry Winter Davis of Maryland and adopted by congress during Mr. Lincoln's administration, it was provided that so soon as resistance to the national authority had ceased in any state, the governor should enroll the white male citizens, and then an election of delegates to the constitutional convention should be ordered. Said Oliver P. Morton, the great war governor of Indiana, in a speech delivered in his state in 1865, in regard to the question of admitting the freedmen of the Southern states to vote, "While I admit the equal rights of all men and that in time all men will have the right to vote without distinction of color or race, I yet believe that in the case of four million of slaves just freed from bondage there should be a period of probation before they are brought to the exercise of political power."

Nor does it appear, that more than their leaders, the masses of the Northern people had attained the conclusion that unlimited negro suffrage would be either salutary or right. Widely varying indeed in the two sections was the importance of the question. In the South there was one negro of voting age to two white men. In the North the proportion was eighty-four whites to one negro. Notwithstanding the inappreciable numbers of the negro in the Northern states, the constitutions of all but six had the word "white" as a qualification to manhood suffrage. A few illustrations will show the strong prevalence of the opinion that this was essential. In 1868 the people of Michigan attempted to change the constitution. A distinct issue on the question of negro suffrage was made between the two parties, and at the April election the constitution was rejected by a majority of forty thousand votes. In 1867 the people of New York assembled in convention at Albany. The laws of the state had attached a property qualification to the right of suffrage by negroes. It was insisted that the discrimination should be abolished, and the vote on this question was taken Nov. 2, 1869. Again by a majority of 40,000 the people refused to change the constitution in this respect. The action of many other Northern states might be cited to demonstrate the existence a strong public opinion against unlimited negro suffrage. Certain it is that it formed no part of Mr. Lincoln's plans for the

restoration of the union. And yet how ennobling the generosity, how benevolent the love of Abraham Lincoln for his fellow men. In the history of those terrible days the majesty of his benignant face is lifted above the clouds of human passion that rolled around his constant breast, and his rugged features are lighted with a radiance which fadeth not away. With the concurring opinions of such men as Abraham Lincoln and Alexander H. Stephens, but for the intense political passions of the period, and the mistakes of leading men North and South, a restricted form of negro suffrage in all the country would soon have admitted the superior individuals of that race to the elective franchise and would have spared the Southern States an immovable provincialism in matters political, which may well be regarded as the greatest menace of our country's future.

The accession of Andrew Johnson did not materially change the presidential policy which had been marked out by Mr. Lincoln. It is true that the new president said much about the blackness of the crime of Southern treason, much about the necessity of inflicting extreme measures upon the Southern leaders. But it is also true that Mr. McCullough, who was secretary of the treasury under both, in his "Men and Measures of Half a Century" declared that "the work of reconstruction was taken up just where Mr. Lincoln had left it." This statement is confirmed by the testimony of Gen. Grant before the committee for the impeachment of Johnson. It is further confirmed by the fact that the cabinet remained in office under Johnson, and in the early days of his administration were unanimous in support of this plan. Johnson unhappily possessed little of the persuasive and commanding influence of Lincoln. That he was honest is no longer questioned. That he was patriotic is conceded. But in self-importance he was unsurpassed. "Toil and honest advocacy of the great principles of free government," the new president observed, "have been my lot." He added, "the duties have been mine, the consequences God's." The complacency of this observation has not been attained by any other ruler, save by that perhaps imaginary monarch commemorated in the melody of Admiral Coghlan's famous song, "Myself and God."

The new administration worked rapidly. With the assistance of William H. Seward and the other statesmen who had com-

posed the war cabinet of Mr. Lincoln, in six weeks the plan of reconstruction was put forward. It was substantially that of Mr. Lincoln for Louisiana and North Carolina, and thus the responsibilities for reconstruction were placed upon the qualified voters according to the laws in force at the time of secession and the rehabilitation of the states lately in secession was given over to the hands of the white race.

In a period remarkably short the Southern State governments were reorganized, their legislatures were enacting laws, governors were elected, judges appointed, the courts were in session, and senators and representatives to the national congress were chosen. No one who knew the men chosen for officials and representatives of the new Southern governments could hesitate in the opinion that they were among the most enlightened of that time. It has been objected by one of their detractors, that the Southern people sent to these conventions men who had been high in rank in the Confederate armies. That Confederate soldiers were selected for Southern conventions will not be surprising when it is reflected that practically every able-bodied man in the South had borne arms in the great struggle. It was said, I believe by Mr. Greeley, that for its soldiers the Confederate government had robbed the cradle and the grave. Nor is it surprising that the force and decision of character, and imperturbability of judgment by which individuals won high rank in the Southern armies, peculiarly fitted the same men for responsible duties in political bodies. The same writer has pointed out the impropriety with which such delegates attended the conventions of their respective states, while clothed in the uniform of the rank they lately held in the "rebel" army. A change of costume would no doubt have been appropriate, no doubt was desired, but when one has but one coat, he is obliged to wear it. Few, if any, will now question that these men belonged to as high a class of statesmanship and public virtue as the South has ever produced. With an exercise of popular discretion which may well be deemed exquisite, they were selected with great regard to conservatism of record. Many of them had been resolute opponents of secession, and had cast their fortunes with the Confederacy in deference only to that overpowering sense of duty to the state, which against his every inclination had controlled the action of

Robert Edward Lee, and which, by most Southern men of elevation of character, was at that time regarded as the unquestionable dictate of principle and honor.

If I should call the gilded roll selected by my own state, the superiority of the new governments would plainly appear. The governor was Charles J. Jenkins, an ex-justice of the supreme court, who had been offered the position of secretary of the interior under President Fillmore, and who had been named as candidate for vice-president with Daniel Webster. In recent days Georgia has named two of her illustrious sons for statues in the American Valhalla, the old Hall of Representatives in the capitol at Washington. One of these, Alexander Hamilton Stephens, who, though vice-president of the Confederacy, to the last, had struggled to assuage the fires of passion in the angry breasts of his countrymen, and to dissuade them from the madness of secession, was elected as one of the senators from Georgia.

When the Charleston convention of 1860 was disrupted, a Southern man of commanding position, and unflinching devotion to the union was sought as a candidate for vice-president on the ticket with Stephen A. Douglass. Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia was selected. For his powers as a jurist, orator and statesman and in nobility of character, it will be disputed whether the state has ever produced his superior. I have known many elderly citizens of my state who believed that but for a ruthless trick, the commanding and classic eloquence of that great patriot would have mastered and swayed the Georgia convention against the ordinance of secession, and made the union loving principles of the masses of its people triumphant. This noble Georgian was elected by the new legislature to be United States senator with Alexander H. Stephens.

By selecting such men as their representatives the Southern people gave evidence that with them the war was over and that their reconciliation was complete. Nor were the people of the North behind them in this feeling. The first acts of the provisional governments were regarded with the friendliest interest, and the apparent success of his reconstruction measures, won a high degree of popularity for the president.

At this critical juncture, most unhappily for the future of the country, the Southern state legislatures entered upon a course

of legislation with regard to the negro, which proved that they wholly misunderstood the public opinion in Northern States. And the result, with equal clearness proved that the Northern leaders did not comprehend the motives or the exigencies of the Southern people. The attempt was to enact laws to compel the excited and idle masses of negroes to go to work.

In the light of the present day, it will, I think be seen, that this was not unnatural, nor wholly inexcusable. To the negro of all others, a novel sensation is the most delightful. The possibility of emancipation had been wholly beyond the comprehension of the masses of this light-hearted race. As a child regards a new toy, so did millions of these black people regard their freedom. They had no comprehension of the dignity or necessity of labor. Indeed, to teach them the indispensable lesson is now the supreme task of the soundest philosopher and the most practical philanthropist the race has ever produced. No one can doubt that I refer to Booker Washington, the unselfish president of the great Alabama institution for the industrial training of colored youth.

In slavery labor had been a task. Slavery was now gone. Henceforward they would sail through life "on seas of milk, in ships of amber." It followed that few of them could be induced to work at all. No matter how explicit the contract, how favorable the wage, how great the exigency, whether seed time or harvest, how trivial the excuse, away they went by the hundreds and thousands, rejoicing in their newly acquired freedom, leaving the stern and anxious paroled prisoner of war to contemplate his ruined home, his wasted farm, his rotting crops, the wife and daughters struggling with unaccustomed conditions; the prospect of hunger for his family, and sale by judicial process of the remnants of his estate. The result was that the representatives of these people began to legislate, and such legislation as they worked out, plausibly appeared to the great leaders of anti-slavery thought, as an effort on the part of Southern men, notwithstanding all that had been done and suffered, to perpetuate the slavery of the African race. Having to deal with unprecedented conditions, it is true that much of this legislation was ill-considered and unjust. The excitement it created in the north was ominous. It is however, difficult to do justice to the motives which prompt political

action, unless the point of view of the actors is clearly seen. No other than a Southern man who lived through this period, can understand the desperation and despair of a ruined people which prompted measures for the control of their former slaves, idling away the precious hours, hours of labor indispensable to the salvation of the whites, and the sustenance of the blacks themselves. That many of these measures were as unjustifiable as they were ineffective, the truest friend of the South may now plainly concede. That they were prompted by odious and detestable motives, by malignant cunning, or by hatred of the negro, as has been charged, may be as plainly denied. Some of the worst of these measures were promptly vetoed by such a high-minded ex-Confederate as Governor Patton of Alabama. Others like that enacted in the State of Georgia, were either set at naught by repeated decisions of the courts or repealed by subsequent legislatures. Most unhappily, however, for our country in that day of fierce political passion, they were held to justify the overturning of the state governments which had been re-established, the refusal of the Southern States representation in congress, the declaration that they were "dead states" subject to the disposition of the victorious section, the appointment of military governors over every Southern State, and first instance in the history of mankind, the complete subordination of the Caucasian to the African race.

The leader at this period of the great Republican majority in the House of Representatives was Thaddeus Stevens. This famous man was one of the strongest, and one of the most remarkable, of that multitude of statesmen and patriots who have sprung from the granitic soil of New England. Ever a hater of human slavery, he had made his home in a county of Pennsylvania bounded on the south by Mason and Dixon's line, and the frequent spectacle of fugitive slaves worn and wasted by their night marches toward the North star to gain the protection of free soil, intensified in him this feeling until it became the strongest passion of his nature. He was the peculiar champion of that helpless people, and when emancipation had been accomplished he had no purpose to stop short of the complete enfranchisement of the negro. It was this man who, with full control, on the meeting of the 39th congress, was now to direct the legislation which would

govern the relations of the Southern white people with their former slaves.

When the 39th congress assembled, Mr. Stevens immediately offered a resolution to provide for a joint committee on the subject, and on December 18, 1865, the house proceeded to the consideration of congressional reconstruction. With the clear conceptions of a great logician, he outlined a premise upon which the whole frame-work of congressional reconstruction must necessarily rest. It involved the power of congress to enforce negro suffrage in the Southern States, even before such suffrage had been permitted by the states which had retained their fealty to the union. It will be recalled that section 2 of article I of the constitution provides that the electors in each state shall have the qualifications required for electors of the most numerous branch of the state legislature. When Mr. Stevens arose and began that memorable speech, the electors of every state, North and South, except Kansas and five New England states, were members of the white race. If the Southern States retained their statehood, no one saw more clearly than Mr. Stevens, that by virtue of that clause of the constitution, congress had no power to prescribe the qualifications of electors. The constitution in this respect had not been changed. Then it was necessary to his purpose that this statehood should be denied. "There is," he said, "fortunately no difficulty in solving this question unless the law of nations is a dead letter. War between two acknowledged belligerents severed their original compacts and broke all ties that bound them together; the future condition of the conquered power depends on the will of the conquerer. They must come in as new states, or remain as conquered provinces." He referred contemptuously to the "dreaming theorists who imagine that these states have never been out of the union." It will not subserve any good purpose at this time to question either the sincerity or the patriotism of that great debater and parliamentarian, nor do I question them. But was this proposition, fraught as it was with immediate and inconceivable disaster to his countrymen, and with their estrangement for more than a generation, maintainable as American law? As these words of Mr. Stevens were uttered in the House of Representatives, that august court, the final arbiter of this and every other question arising under

the constitution and laws of the United States capable of submission to a court of justice, was sitting hard by in that historic chamber, which in years past had resounded with the stately eloquence of the great Defender of the constitution. Daniel Webster was dead, but we may believe that his spirit will ever love the chamber where once his conquering lance rang full on the shield of every champion of disunion, that chamber where now sat the court, in which he had counseled and Marshall and Story had ruled. Three years had passed. The state of Texas had appealed to the original jurisdiction of that court, in a case which involved the precise proposition on which the reconstruction legislation was based, namely, that the seceding and conquered states were dead and no longer a part of the Union, and the supreme court of the United States declared through Chief Justice Chase: "The constitution in all its provisions looks to an indestructible union, composed of indestructible states. The ordinances of secession were utterly without operation in law. It certainly follows that the state did not cease to be a state, nor her citizens to be citizens of the union. If this were otherwise, the state must have become foreign, and her citizens foreigners, the war must have ceased to be a war for the suppression of rebellion, and must have become a war for conquest and subjugation."

From that lucid and impressive declaration of the indestructibility of the American Union, in all the years since then, even by a hairsbreadth, that august tribunal has never departed, and the Hon. George F. Hoar, in recent years eulogizing the supreme court to the Virginia State Bar Association, said: "I have spoken in behalf of a tribunal whose judgments upon the greatest questions with which it has ever had to deal, have overturned, baffled and brought to naught the policy in regard to the great matter of reconstruction of the party to which I myself belong, and the school of politics in which I have been trained."

The reconstruction law, in the language of General Garfield "was written with a steel pen made out of a bayonet." As passed it provided that when the people of any of the insurrectionary states should have adopted a constitution passed by a convention of delegates chosen by male citizens of whatever race, color or previous condition, and when such constitution shall

provide that the elective franchise shall be enjoyed by all such persons as have the qualifications herein stated for the election of delegates, said state shall be declared entitled to representation in congress. "This," said a biographer of Thaddeus Stevens, "practically treated the Southern States as conquered provinces, and as entitled to no rights under the constitution. It prescribed universal suffrage for the black as well as the white man, not merely in formation of the new state constitutions but as an enduring part of those instruments."

It is unquestionable that Mr. Stevens, and the great leaders of the union who acted with him, had no conception of the disasters to the South, the disgrace to the country, and the continued calamities which this reconstruction legislation would entail. The history of the world had given no account of an assembly of Africans for the purpose of framing a government. Without a precedent in fact, it is not surprising that such assemblies in the South should have been startling in result. The governments of the Southern States had ever been and are now conducted with the most scrupulous regard for economy and frugality. It cannot be said that Mr. Blaine in any of his speeches or writings was too partial to Southern statesmen, but in the first volume of his "Twenty Years of Congress," we find this language: "They constituted a remarkable body of men. * * * They gave deep study to the science of government. They were admirably trained as debaters, and they became skilled in the management of parliamentary bodies. As a rule they were liberally educated. * * * They were almost without exception men of high integrity and they were especially and jealously careful of the public money. Too often lavish in their personal expenditures, they believed in economical government, and through the long period of their domination they guarded the treasury with rigid and unceasing vigilance against every attempt at extravagance, and against every form of corruption." From the government of such men to the governments of the reconstruction era, the declension was indeed precipitous.

The figures of the census of 1870, in all their nakedness, yet eloquently, depict the consequent misery of fourteen American states. The briefest citation will suffice. In 1860 the assessed

value of property in Massachusetts was but one hundred and seven million dollars more than the assessed value of property in Georgia. In 1870 the assessed value of property in Massachusetts was more than one-half the entire taxable wealth of the fourteen Southern States. In 1860 the South owned 44 per cent or nearly half the taxable values of the whole country. In 1870 the assessed value of property in New York and Pennsylvania alone was greater than that in the whole South. South Carolina, which in 1860, had been third in wealth per capita of its inhabitants, had fallen to thirtieth, Georgia had fallen from the seventh to the thirty-ninth place, and Alabama from the eleventh to the forty-fourth. The Constitutional History of the United States by Francis Newton Thorpe, states, that excluding the value of slaves, the people of the South, in the five years of the war had lost in property, in funds and by the increase of indebtedness, nearly three thousand million dollars, and in addition to this they were indebted to the merchants of the North for goods purchased and money borrowed for four hundred and eight millions more. Their indebtedness exceeded by nearly fourteen hundred millions the assessed value of all the property of the Confederate States in 1865, and was more than two hundred millions greater than the national debt at its highest point. To superadd the losses from the saturnalia of reconstruction was indeed unendurable. The debts of the nine states, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia, at the close of the war, was \$76,416,430. The debts of these same states at the end of negro control was \$289,868,584. The history of the Southern States under negro rule has been summed up by that brilliant writer, Mr. Lecky, in his "Democracy and Liberty," as a "grotesque parody of government, a hideous orgy of anarchy, violence, unrestrained corruption, undisguised ostentatious insulting robbery, such as the world had scarcely ever seen."

The appalling significance of these conditions is plain to every man who is capable of their realization, and it requires little imagination, and a slender acquaintance with economic affairs to conceive the desolation and despair among the people of that vast and prolific territory unsurpassed by any on earth in the variety and value of its productions. It also re-

quired little knowledge of the intrepid and resolute Anglo-Saxon population of those states, to perceive that these conditions would not last. The reconstruction governments as we have seen were accomplished in disregard of the constitution. This, it is plain, was revolution, and by revolution these governments were swiftly overthrown.

Was the material prosperity of a people the measure of their happiness, there would be nothing in the conditions of these Southern States of the American Union to arouse the alarm of those who love them. An increase in population since the days of reconstruction of 44 per cent., in acreage of farms from two hundred and thirty-three millions to nearly four hundred millions, a positive increase of a million farms in twenty years, a percentage of 63 for the South as against 42 for the whole country, an increase in farm values in the same period of upwards of one billion two hundred and seventy-one millions, or about 100 per cent., with a profit on farm investments of 25 per cent. as against 16.2 in the whole country, in cotton manufacturing an increase of 297 per cent in mills, 669 percent in capital, and 1024 per cent. in spindles, an increase of railway mileage of 33,512 miles. or 162 per cent., and other facts equally marvelous, all mark a phenomenal recuperation of the South, as significant of the abounding resources of that favored land, as of the constancy, energy and integrity of its people. Indeed Southern men deserve the sympathy and admiration of the world for the courage, tenacity and fortitude with which they have struggled with penury, the heroism with which they have triumphed over adverse fortunes, the swerveless courage with which they have marched through the valley and shadow of their griefs and sorrows, now perchance under the providence of God, to rest and rejoice in the green fields and by the still waters of our reunited land.

But it is true, that no people can build securely unless the foundations on which they build are also secure, and the foundations of popular government are to be found alone in the freedom and purity of the ballot, in the equal distribution of political power, in the freedom of political thought, and in independence of political action, which can alone make free thought valuable.

The history of reconstruction has left an indellible impres-

sion upon the minds of the Southern people. The words "negro domination" can invoke a hideous specter which will not down. That it is spectral merely has made little difference. It matters not that in a political sense we are now and have been for years politically in as little danger from the negro as we are from the subjects of the Iman of Muscat or the Ahkound of Swat. Negro domination is the monotonous slogan, and notwithstanding the widely varying views of our people on the great questions of the day, we behold the solid South.

In the recent election, by majorities the most unequivocal, the policies of the government have received the approbation of the people of every Northern and Western state. But the Solid South has been immovable. Of the 125 representatives from its homogeneous American population, only four are in apparent sympathy with those measures of the government, through which the people of the United States have attained a plane of prosperity unexampled, and the country itself the attitude of a world power, at once so equable and so irresistible, that the authoritative expression of its people's will seems to have the force and effect of international law. While this is true, it is also true that multitudes of Southern men of the most forceful character are in full accord with these policies. I believe that a majority of Southern men would be as little likely to denounce the treaty of Paris, as the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as unlikely to surrender the Philippine archipelago, as the prairies of Texas. The truth is, our reflecting people know that if the economic policies of the administration were reversed, a wave of bankruptcy would overwhelm our every interest as completely as the boiling floods from the West Indian crater swept a people from among the names of men. They know that the whirr of the cotton mills would be hushed, that the mines would be closed, the forges voiceless, the lumber mills shut down, and the railways no longer taxed to their capacity to move the products of field, forge and factory. They know that in lieu of the remunerative price they now get, they would do well again to secure 5 cents per pound for their annual crop of 10,500,000 bales of that indispensable product of which we hold the monopoly for clothing three-quarters of the human race. Yet they vote with mechanical reiteration against their every interest. Why is this?

In the December number of the *North American Review* may be found the last of the many contributions with which Thomas B. Reed has enriched the political literature of his country. The first sentence was: "The elections for this year have taken place, and we have escaped the one great danger of a Democracy, which is the decision of great questions without discussion." In the Southern States this "one great danger to Democracy" is an accomplished reality. In nothing is the unnatural suppression of political independence there more clearly apparent than in the utter absence of public discussion of national questions. And yet the Southerner is by nature a debater. He debates as the New Englander mechanizes, as the Venetian paints, as the modern Italian sings. Most of the famous men of our past have been noted as great popular orators. The popular assemblies to hear the joint discussions of men and measures resembled the folk-mote of the Anglo-Saxon. When such men as Patrick Henry, John Randolph, Zeb Vance, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, John Forsyth, Alexander H. Stephens, Robert Toombs and Benjamin H. Hill met the people on the hustings, the preparation and efforts of the speakers, and the great interest of the auditors were "bark and steel to the mind." The whole plane of popular mentality was lifted, the whole current of popular thought quickened and clarified. The late Justice L. Q. C. Lamar, himself a marvelous popular orator, once said to me: "I have no skill as a wire puller. Whenever I heard of a combination against me I would go there, speak to the people, and break it up." With such training was it surprising that the Southern statesmen of the historic past were names to conjure with, or that their constituents, though in large numbers denied the advantages of careful education, took an intelligent interest in the affairs of the country and divided upon patriotic principles almost equally between the great parties of the day? Now this is all gone. Of the measure it is no longer inquired with Henry Clay "is it right, will it conduce to the general happiness, and to the elevation of national character? Of the nominee it is no longer asked with Thomas Jefferson, "is he honest, is he capable, is he faithful to the constitution? To such a pitch has this perilous indifference gone, that in the last Kansas City convention a delegate from a noble Southern state arose and declared that he came

from a state which would support any candidate the convention might nominate, on any platform it might draft.

It is true that the Southern people see Republicanism in its most unattractive guise. And when was the occasion within the memory of this generation, where any Northern statesman of national reputation and attractive eloquence undertook to make plain to a Southern audience the great policies of government upon which Republicanism is based? Was there ever a political campaign conducted in a Southern state, by the authorities of the Republican party with the energy, skill and thoroughness to which the people of every Northern state have become habituated? I know that there is an opinion abroad that it would be disagreeable and perhaps dangerous for Republican statesmen from the North to address the masses of the Southern people. If this was once true, it is true no longer. The great leaders of Northern thought would be welcomed with kindly hospitality and heard by courteous if not enthusiastic thousands. No surer means could be adopted for breaking there the hitherto unbroken solidarity of political action. With such campaigns as are conducted in New York, Ohio, Indiana and other Northern states, with a wide dissemination of the great newspapers and other literature, with the "spell-binder" abroad in the land, the people would begin to think for themselves, interest in national politics would be awakened, white men would differ, and black men as well, and as a consequence hopeful progress would be made toward the purity and freedom of the ballot, the restoration of the American spirit, and the return to constitutional methods. Even now thousands of men in the South, mainly young men, are ready to exclaim with Emerson, "Let there be an entrance opened for me into realities. I have worn the fool's cap too long." There are thousands of other men termed by a great Georgian "the educated leaders of labor, who hold in their grasp the ever enlarging fields which employ improve and control mankind." These men especially, and many others resent the fact that they are continually drawn into a political machine which kills thought and stifles reflection. At the University of Georgia, the alma mater of hundreds of the foremost leaders of Southern thought, at the commencement this year, the original addresses of not less than six of the students, were protests against the continued surrender

of political independence on the part of the young men of the South. To me it matters not whether such men ally themselves to the Democratic or Republican party. My plea is for the revival of the American spirit, for the restoration of constitutional methods. I pray to see the handicap of provincialism stricken from the minds of the aspiring youth of my state and my section. I pray to see the imputation of a sullen and immovable resentfulness toward the government and its ennobling purposes removed from my section. Indeed with the masses of the people it does not exist. No man has the right to place the Southern people toward our government in the attitude of Ireland toward the government of Great Britain.

The fear of an impossible negro supremacy is the only obstacle. But is this insurmountable? The argument seems to demand a practical suggestion to relieve the minds of the Southern people from the fear of that supremacy, however unreal it may be. The remedy seems to be as obvious as just. It is to be found in the enactment of impartial laws for white and black alike, which will admit to the franchise the intelligent, upright and responsible of both races, and exclude the venal, the ignorant and the worthless. And such measures need not be confined to the Southern States. The polyglot vote of our great cities, because more effective, seems not infrequently not less dangerous to sane government, than the massed vote of the ignorant blacks. And if the statesmanship which controls the policy of the forty-five indestructible sovereignties, declines to consider such laws as will secure a pure ballot and a free ballot, is it not the part of wisdom for the National government to begin the consideration of a reform so vital to the stability of our institutions? Is it illogical or dangerous to entrust to national law the qualifications of the electorate for national offices, and to entrust the enforcement of the law to the national courts? That it would require a change of the constitution is true, but shall not the constitution be changed if this is plainly essential to effectuate its ennobling, its sublime purposes? Said Mr. Justice Miller, for a unanimous court, in *ex parte Yarborough*, 110 U. S. : "If the very source of power may be poisoned by corruption or controlled by violence and outrage without legal restraint, then indeed is the country in danger and its best powers, its

highest purposes, the hopes which it inspires and the love which enshrines it, are at the mercy of the combinations of those who respect no right but brute force on the one hand, and the unprincipled corruptionist on the other.

It is true that to a Southern man worthy of the name, aye to every informed American, negro domination is unthinkable, but, he is neither a humanitarian nor a patriot, who would see nothing in the future of nine millions of those black people save a piteous story of decadence, degredation and death. It is true that there are negroes whose desperate and bestial savagery have brought the coverts of those horrid jungles where their forebears sweltered, ravished and slew, close to the homes of helpless innocence and trembling virtue. But these brutish beasts are the outcasts of the race, and besides, they are not distinguished for great longevity. It is not just or wise to judge millions of black men by their vilest criminals. He is a poor student of that singular people who does not perceive among them a multitude of types as varying in tribal characteristics as the racial traits of the composite white population of our land. The explanation is easy. The slave-catcher may have captured the cruel cannibal of the Congo, the Bechuana of the Transvaal, the Makololo of the Zambesi, the tribesmen of the gentle black men who followed and nurtured Livingstone in his long travels, or of the brave Zanzibari who marched and fought with Stanley in his tremendous journey across the dark continent. Are the kindly and intelligent, the industrious and faithful of this people to be deprived of hope because others are stupid, treacherous, corrupt? Indeed, thousands of these colored men are good citizens and useful members of society. When they were emancipated, every member of the race might have joined as most of them no doubt did, in the old Methodist hymn:

"No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness."

How is it now? On the 10th inst., the Director of the Census kindly favored me with a statement which shows the most marvelous advance in the acquisition of property by this people. From this it appears that in the United States the negro farmers own and operate 746,717 farms. These include 38,233,933 acres. Their value is \$199,943,734. The value of the products for the

year 1899 was \$255, 751,145. It will be observed that this immense sum of productive capacity in one year is more than 50 per cent. of the entire value of the farms, and to produce it they expended only \$8,789,792 for labor and \$5,614,841 for fertilizers, leaving them a net profit on one year's operations \$241,346,512, which is 48 per cent of their investment. An easy explanation of this is that most of their labor is the work of themselves their wives and children. The doctrines of Malthus have had as yet no appreciable effect upon these American citizens of African descent, and when a colored farmer in Georgia is asked how many children he has, he will usually reply, "I have five hoe hands and six cotton pickers." In my own state of Georgia, there are nearly 83,000 farms owned and operated by negroes with an acreage of nearly 5,500,000, and a value of \$43,992,879. The value of their products for the year 1899 in that state alone was \$29,939,421. They expended for labor \$1,208,860 and for fertilizers \$1,684,010. From these figures an easy calculation shows that the negro who owned his farm in Georgia, in an average year made a profit of 61 per cent. on his farming operations. It is idle to speak of the deportation of a population so valuable. The truth is, we could not get along without them. They have no purpose to become extinct themselves. Then it follows that it is the duty of every true man to do all in his power to make them better citizens and better men.

A danger to the welfare of the Southern States is the possible reduction of the existing number of representatives apportioned upon millions of this population whose men of voting age are by state action denied the suffrage. This may any day startle the country, as nothing has done since the reconstruction era. No change of the constitution is here required. A majority of the congress, under the provisions of the fourteenth amendment have the power if they have the will. Thirty-six representatives are apportioned to the Southern States upon the basis of the black population. Surely anxious thought on a matter so vital is timely when it is reflected that in an entire state with a population of 557,807 whites and 782,321 blacks, in electing seven congressmen, there were cast in the last election only 741 votes in opposition to the prevailing party. But no measure, however stringent will be effective for good government or stable prosper-

ity if it engenders the universal hostility of a resolute people. This will be inevitable from a reduction of our representation. We may trust that this will not be attempted. But it is at least timely to stimulate if we may profound political thought among our people, which may avoid the necessity of a measure so drastic and so exciting. To stimulate such thought I understand to be a mission of the Independent Club. Would that there were such an organization in every Southern community, an association of high-minded and disinterested men whose love for country and humanity prompts the consecration of their powers to the promotion of independence.

"Heaven's next best gift
To that of life and an immortal soul!"

After all that has been said and done, we have abounding reasons for gratitude to Him who holds the destinies of nations in the hollow of His hands, for the blessings we enjoy in our national life. The swiftness with which the wounds of our great Civil War were healed and its scars obliterated is literally without precedent in the annals of time. In the space of a moment, if counted by the life of a nation, the men who were leaders in the Confederate struggle were restored as leaders in the official life of the union. Not a proscription, not a confiscation, not an execution under the charge of treason, marked the termination of that titanic struggle which utterly destroyed seven billions of values and seven hundred thousand human lives. And let me say that this national magnanimity, only possible where government is controlled by the great heart of the people, was not undeserved by Southern men. There was on their part no disloyalty to the principles of the constitution. It was merely a question with them as to where their allegiance was due. Of these men General Grant penned with the faltering hand of the dying his conviction that they were as sincere as were his own gallant troops in their faith in the cause for which they fought. And said our living president, himself a soldier, but like your own Hamilton, "formed for all parts and in all shining variously great," they "had a most hearty faith in the justice of their cause," and "he is but a poor American whose veins do not thrill with pride as he reads the deeds of desperate prowess done by the Confederate armies."

Nor are they without claims upon your gratitude. Blot from the flag every star placed there by the statesmanship or valor of your Southern brethren and there will be diminished by half, its scintillating glories. Well do I know that people. It is a temperate people, a devout, God-fearing people, faithful to home and wife and little ones, as jurors true and impartial. Less than one in a hundred of any other save the old American strain. Clear and shrewd in mind, in frame tall and slender, but strong and sinewy, with Huguenot, Anglo-Saxon or Scotch-Irish faces—the faces of their sires of old who on the field of Ivry, pressed where led the helmet of Navarre; faces of sires who greeted good Queen Bess at Tilbury, when she rode down the lines of her yeomanry marshalled to meet the dreaded infantry of Spain; faces of sires who at Dunbar spurred after the gleaming sword of Cromwell when he shouted, “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered!” faces of sires who hurled the enemies of civil and religious liberty from the battlements of Londonderry and with William of Orange breasted the shot-riven waters of the Boyne; faces of sires who fell in

“With the old Continentals.

In ragged regimentals, yielding not.”

Think you, my countrymen, when the military scientists of other lands are estimating the fighting strength of the American people, that while they count the hero boys in blue, they will overlook the sons of that far-flung battle line of gray whose daring and constancy will live in song and story to the latest times? No! The tangled chapparal of Guasimas, the ensanguined summit of San Juan, the winds that woo Manila bay, the waves of ocean that moan through the shot-riven hulks of Spain, have told the story to the ages that now and forever in its need, our every heart is steeled and every arm is nerved to uphold in safety and in honor the Flag of the freeman’s home and hope.

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